

Art Historical Research

This work is a full-length portrait of an unknown man wearing red and white robes with a Garter chain round his neck. The robes have two horizontal bars of ermine across the chest, identifying the wearer as a Baron.¹ The garter chain consists of alternating Tudor roses and knots, with a medal depicting St. George and the Dragon hanging from it. This identifies him as a knight of the Garter, the oldest and most senior order of chivalry, founded by Edward III in 1348.² The order is limited to just twenty-four Garter knights, plus members of the royal family. The motto of the Garter Knights: 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' (Shame on him who thinks this evil) is partially legible around the medal and on the circular motif on the left shoulder.

The portrait is described in Goodison's catalogue of portraits at Christ's, Clare and Sidney Sussex colleges. It was reportedly purchased by Clare College in 1939 from Christies and was thought at that time to be a portrait of the Thomas Cecil, 2nd Baron Burghley and 1st Earl of Exeter.³ However, the catalogue states that the ruff worn in the portrait has since been dated to around 1615. As Thomas Cecil received the Garter in 1601 and was created an Earl in 1605 the portrait would have to be between these two dates, as he wears the robes of a Baron rather than those of an Earl. Therefore the identification of the sitter as Thomas Cecil was ruled out, as the date of the ruff and the costume worn would not be consistent with this identification. The portrait is also mentioned by Strong, where this observation is first made.⁴

A reproduction of the portrait is shown in *Connoisseur*, in which it is described as a portrait of the 2nd Baron Burghley and given the attribution of Paul van Somer.⁵ At this time (1923) the portrait was in the possession of the Willoughby de Broke family and is described as a portrait of Thomas Cecil. The portrait is described as having been purchased in 1854 along with a picture of Queen Elizabeth by Zuccaro as a pair to it. It was soon after sold by Christies in 1924 and bought by Captain N. R. Colville. It was again sold through Christies in 1939 and bought by the College. The portrait is again reproduced in 'Elizabethan Pageantry'⁶, and is given an attribution to Federigo Zuccaro. Both reproductions appear to show the portrait in the same form as it was when it entered the Hamilton Kerr Institute studios, although the images are fairly dark and details are difficult to make out.

Federigo Zuccaro died in 1609, making it highly improbable that the portrait is by him, if the dating of the ruff to around 1615 is correct. He was in England in 1574-75 where he is known to have made a drawing of Queen Elizabeth. Many other portraits of the Queen have also been attributed to him at various times, but have not been confirmed,⁷ therefore it is difficult to know which portrait was acquired as a pair to the portrait under discussion. Paul van Somer (c.1577 – 1622) was one of the principal portraitists working in Britain before the arrival of van Dyck. He was born in Antwerp and came to London in 1616 where he painted many portraits at the court of James I. His dates would make him a more likely candidate; he is known to have painted full length portraits of noblemen, including at least two of James I.⁸

The discovery that the Garter collar was a later addition makes identification of the sitter even more difficult. We do not know if this was added because the original sitter was created a Knight of the Garter after the portrait was completed, or whether it was added to change the identity of the portrait, possibly to make it more saleable. In identifying the sitter we are looking for someone who was a Baron in 1615, who may have been later created a Knight of the Garter. The evidence suggests that the

¹ 'Robes', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, University of Chicago, 1949.

² Official British Monarchy Website <<http://www.royal.gov.uk/output/page490.asp>>, accessed 2/12/05.

³ Goodison, J. W., *Catalogue of the portraits in Christ's, Clare and Sidney Sussex Colleges*, Cambridge Antiquarian Records Society, 1985.

⁴ Strong, R., *Tudor and Jacobean Portraits*, Volume 1, National Portrait Gallery, 1969, p118.

⁵ *Connoisseur*, lxvi, 1923, 227, note by Miss Mary Williams

⁶ H. K. Morse, *Elizabethan Pageantry*, A Pictorial Survey of Costume 1560-1620, Studio Books, 1934, p.89

⁷ Murray, P. & Murray, L., *The Penguin Dictionary of Art and Artists*, Penguin, 1976.

⁸ Strong, R., *Tudor and Jacobean Portraits*, Volume 2, National Portrait Gallery, 1969, pl. 352 & 353.

alterations were made quite some time after the portrait was completed, not during the sitter's lifetime. The portrait was purchased in 1854 by the Willoughby de Broke family, who appear to have believed that the sitter was Thomas Cecil. It seems likely that the alteration was made before this date, as otherwise we would expect the family to know about it. The alterations had definitely been made by 1923, as we have a photographic reproduction of it from this date. At this time the niece of Margaret Dowager Lady Willoughby de Broke, who had originally bought the painting, put forward a request for more information about it in *Connoisseur*.⁹



Figure 7.
The Insignia of the Garter Knights. Top, The Garter; Centre, the Garter Collar with the Great George hanging from it; Bottom left, the Lesser George sash badge; Bottom right, the Garter Star

Further Research

Garter regalia

Garter knights are often shown in portraits wearing the full Garter robes, consisting of a dark blue mantle with a white lining, with an embroidered shield on the left shoulder, and a red sash over red and white garments. The mantle is fastened round the neck with two long blue and gold cords, which end in large tassels. The man in the Clare College portrait does not wear the Garter robes, which would not be that unusual in itself, but does have what appears to be an embroidered shield on the shoulder of his red Baron's robe, which would normally be placed on the blue Garter cloak. In addition, the two large tassels on long cords also belong to the blue Garter cloak, so are wrongly added here to the robes worn. This addition of the Garter insignia on the wrong type of cloak gives further evidence to that gained by technical examination that the Garter chain was added at a later date, probably by someone who wasn't fully aware of the correct regalia of the order.

⁹ *Connoisseur*, lxxvi, 1923, 227, note by Miss Mary Williams

It also seems more usual for the Garter collar to have the 'Great George' hanging from it, a small enamelled tableaux of St. George slaying the dragon. The medal worn in this portrait resembles the 'Lesser George' sash badge, usually worn either on the sash over the shoulder or hung from a neck ribbon on occasions where the more formal collar is not worn, see Figure 7.

Investigation of the badge

The badge visible in the X-ray was investigated in an attempt to discover what this might signify and why it had been painted out. The two badges – the one on the hat and that seen in the X-ray have some similarity in design, both having three main plumes atop a rounded base. It was thought that the badge in the X-ray might be of use in identifying the sitter, for example if it showed a family crest or was a medal indicating he was a member of a particular order. However, it could also be a purely decorative piece.

The design does have some similarity to another part of the regalia of the Garter Knights – the Garter star. This consists of a red St George's cross in the centre of a circular blue Garter, see figure 7. The star is normally worn on the blue cloak of the Order. Although the circular part of the badge is very similar, the rest of the design does not correspond to the shape of the star. This part of the regalia did not come into use until the 1630s, so this badge would be unlikely to be the star, assuming it is an original part of the image. It also seems to make little sense to cover up one part of Garter regalia at the same time as adding the Garter collar and tassels.

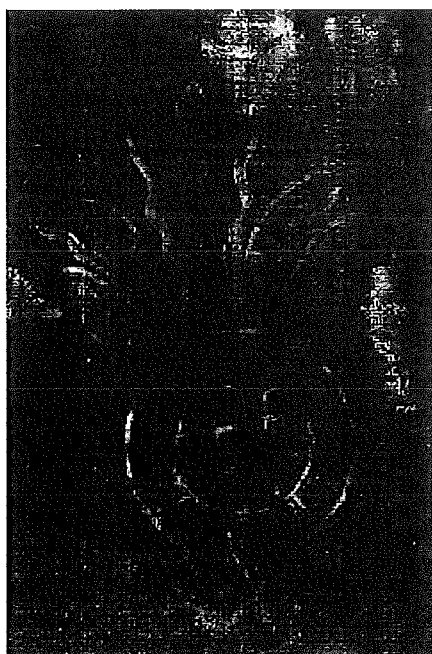


Figure 8.

Far left, the x-ray of the badge. Left, the outline traced from the x-ray to show the shape more clearly. Compare to the Garter Star in figure 7 and designs for aigrettes in figure 9.

Looking at examples of 17th century jewellery, similar designs were found for aigrettes – plume shaped pieces of jewellery worn in the hair or hat. Designs were found which were made by Arnold Lulls in c.1610, for Queen Anne of Denmark, wife of James I. The three examples shown in figure 9 are particularly similar to the badge in the x-ray, with several plumes joined at the base to a circular design.^{10, 11}

¹⁰ Scarisbrick, D., *Tudor and Jacobean Jewellery*, Tate, 1995.

¹¹ The Arnold Lulls book of Jewels, *Archaeologia*, 1986, pp227-37.

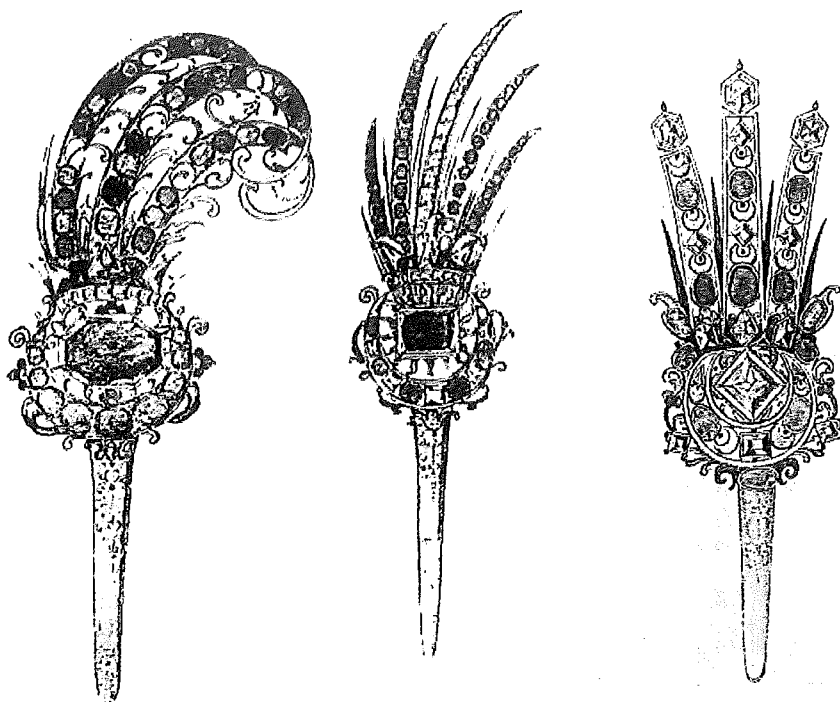


Figure 9. Three examples of Aigrettes designed by Arnold Lulls, c.1610.

James I popularised large hat-jewels of this type and examples can be seen in many contemporary portraits. The popularity of these types of jewels at this time would seem to confirm the proposed date of the portrait and the original nature of the badge seen in the X-ray. This evidence therefore suggests that this jewel was probably a decorative piece rather than being of particular significance. However, it is still possible that the jewel might be an individually designed piece made for a particular client, which could be identified.

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